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SHOULD THE DENOMINATIONAL DISTINCTIONS OF CHRISTIAN LANDS BE PERPETUATED ON MISSION FIELDS?

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Of course not. Even the most rabid sectarian would answer this question negatively, could his sect be the favored one. The ideal of all Christian workers is, beyond question, that of an undivided church in each land. The question, however, is the practical one confronting modern missions. Can they be so adjusted and carried on under present-day conditions as to avoid the disadvantages of sectarianism? Or—to change the wording—should the local churches resulting from the missionary work of separate denominations be united into a single native church in which the denominational distinctions of the co-operating missions are obliterated? And, if so, in what way may such union be effected? My answer to this question must be stated in a series of propositions, the elaboration and defense of which the limits of this paper will not allow.

1. It is a mistake to denounce denominational distinctions. These

have arisen under God's providence, and, with possibly rare exceptions, were religiously imperative. The rise of divisions in the church has been a necessary step in Christian progress. We may well deplore the evils they have occasioned, but we should not overlook the benefits they have secured.

2. Denominational distinctions are twofold, doctrinal and organizational. History shows that each of these has had powerful influence on religious life and development. But history also shows that many distinctions once thought vital are not so. One of the problems with which modern Protestantism is unconsciously wrestling is the question: Which of the doctrinal and organizational distinctions of denominations are vital and which are not? The solution of this problem is being attained through experience—through the application of the principles of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fit. Quite unexpectedly to each group of Christians, hated theological doctrines and despised ecclesiastical polities are proving themselves fitted to survive because of their ability to produce and maintain genuine Christian life. God has blessed their labors far beyond the expectations of their opponents.

3. Under the present conditions of Christendom denominational extension in mission fields has been, and still is, unavoidable. Missionaries whose education and experience are limited to the denominations to which they belong cannot do otherwise than plant Christianity in the doctrinal and ecclesiastical forms with which they are acquainted. These are, indeed, the only forms they can make effective. How, for instance, could I, a Congregationalist by birth, education, and mature conviction, effectively teach Christianity in the form required by the Episcopal doctrine of ordination, the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper, or any other belief or practice contrary to my convictions?

4. In the long run, however, this extension of denominational distinctions will be not without its advantages. When unified native churches shall arise, native Christians will be able to make a synthesis of the varied doctrines and practices introduced by missionaries, and to establish their churches with a wealth of forms and variety of beliefs and experiences impossible, had all missionary work been carried on under a single type of polity or theology.

5. It was highly desirable for the development of Christianity even in Christian lands that each distinct type of theology and polity should put its theories and convictions to the test in fresh soil. The modern collapse of sectarian antagonisms and the development of even interdenominational cordiality are in no small part due to the discovery that the Christian work of denominations, having supposedly defective forms of polity and theology, is nevertheless blessed of God. The once dominant assumption that "my church" possesses all truth is being overthrown by evangelistic experiments in non-Christian lands. Interdenominational charity is one of the by-products of foreign evangelism. The work of the Holy Spirit is seen to be confined to no one church, to depend on no particular system of theology, to be tied to no particular ritual or polity. This has been a lesson of immense importance which the churches have been long in learning; and even yet the Christian church as a whole cannot be said to have learned it.

6. Complete obliteration of denominational distinctions in foreign missionary work is as yet impossible. The diversities of theological beliefs and of ecclesiastical organizations are too great to admit of real union. Few Protestants probably would be willing to surrender the proclamation of Christianity in any land exclusively to Roman or Greek Catholics on the one hand, or to Plymouth Brethren on the other. Few non-Episcopal Protestants would wish to see High Church Sacramentarian Anglicanism the only form of Christianity given to a non-Christian people. There are still many Trinitarians and Unitarians, Calvinists and Arminians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Baptists who would similarly be unwilling to surrender a field exclusively to alien denominations.

7. But the practical question today is as to the amount of concession in creed and polity possible and desirable between those groups of Protestants who are finding themselves in closer agreement on fundamentals than they had supposed. This question cannot be answered dogmatically by anyone. A few principles, however, are clear. (a) The surrender of conscientious convictions by any missionary or denomination is undesirable as well as un-Christian. Everyone must be faithful to the truth God has revealed to him. (b) But equally important is charity of word and thought toward those who differ.

Missionaries should take pains to teach converts that in fundamentals all Protestant denominations are agreed. The chief differences are today organizational. These have to do with questions of practical efficiency, not with salvation. (c) Co-operation in many kinds of work is possible; and wherever possible, it is highly imperative, as showing in practical forms a unity deeper than the differences. Bible translation and publication, hymn-books, Christian literature, mass-meetings, have been fields of successful union work. Co-operation, however, should be pushed in medical and educational work. So far as feasible, all Protestant missions in each land should be federated, and should develop their federal activity to the greatest possible extent. A single annual report covering the entire Protestant work would be of great value. The transfer of native membership from one denomination to another, according to the convenience of members who have changed their residences, should be made easy and even be urged. And I would go even a step farther. I am convinced that, in some lands at least, for the sake of the independent native church that is finally to arise, there should be co-operation in theological education.

The success of all co-operative enterprises, however, depends on the spirit of the men in charge, and on the details of the methods of co-operation. This brief article is naturally not the place in which to discuss these details. Successful co-operation along the lines here mentioned would prevent the wasteful reduplication of necessarily expensive institutions, as well as make possible their adequate support, both of which are important considerations in effective Christian propagation.

8. The aim of foreign missions should be, and doubtless, in the case of Protestant missions, is, the establishment of self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing churches. In my mind, this includes final organic separation of the native from the mother-church. The normal development of the native church, and the complete adaptation of the forms of Christian truth, as well as of ecclesiastical organization, to the people of any land, is impossible so long as the native church is ecclesiastically and theologically dependent on the votes and beliefs of Christians of an alien race and different civilization thousands of miles away.

9. The truly native church, in highly civilized non-Christian lands, cannot be founded by foreigners. Missionaries can proclaim the Christian evangel, plant the Christian life, teach the Christian conceptions of God and man in the forms known to them, and can organize local groups of Christians, helping them in their earlier ecclesiastical experiments. They can lay foundations, prepare the soil, encourage, suggest, and stimulate. But not until a country possesses a large group of self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating churches, ministered to by many well-educated, consecrated, and gifted pastors who, in order more effectively to evangelize their own people, have secured complete ecclesiastical independence, can a truly native church be said to have arisen.

Such an ecclesiastical church should, in my opinion, be brought into existence, be given organic form, and be officered and supported wholly by natives. Its creed should express the genuine belief of native Christians resulting from their own study of the Bible as guided by the Holy Spirit and in the light of their own religious experience. That creed should not be a translation of some foreign creed, not even of any of the ecumenical creeds of Christendom, although of course these may well be held in high esteem. The creed of the native church should be indigenous, adapted to the truths, and also to errors, of the particular non-Christian environment in the midst of which it lives and with which it must cope. Only when a native church has arisen from which all authoritative and even nominal control by missionaries or foreign ecclesiastical organizations has been eliminated can the Christian work in any land be freed from the popular objection of being a "foreign" religion. In proportion to the civilization of a people, however, is overcoming of such an objection essential to the extensive evangelization of that people.

10. A significant fact reveals the unwisdom of expecting foreign missionaries to take the lead in organizing strictly native churches. Its brief statement will probably occasion misunderstanding. Yet even at this risk its importance demands recognition.

Christian triumphs in all lands, in both ancient and modern times, have been due to the exceptional efficiency of Christians in humanitarian enterprise, personal integrity, and social reforms, rather than to their metaphysical doctrines, systematic theologies, and specific

types of church organization. Nevertheless, for centuries teachers of Christianity have in their formal instruction reversed the emphasis. They have regarded these latter as the essentials of Christianity. They have insisted that acceptance of certain theological creeds and membership in their own churches are primary conditions of salvation. In the teaching and requirements of Jesus, however, systematic doctrine, and especially metaphysics, rituals, and church organizations, are never more than implicit, while practical godliness, moral integrity, and universal brotherly kindness are the essentials. Since the time of Jesus, in proportion as his disciples have taught and practiced these, has the gospel triumphed. It is this ethical aspect of Christianity that is today winning its way in the Orient, rather than occidental formulations of Christian metaphysics. These, on the contrary, are proving an obstacle to the spread of Christianity. It is certain that in the organization of independent native churches in the Orient it would be a mistake to make obligatory western metaphysics, rituals, or polity. Metaphysics at least, if present at all in the creeds, should be implicit, as in the teaching of Jesus.

Now, from the very nature of the situation, it is altogether likely that experienced native pastors are less liable than occidental missionaries to introduce occidentalisms into the native church, especially if free, financially and ecclesiastically.

11. These paragraphs are not to be taken as a condemnation of metaphysics, systematic Christian doctrine, or ecclesiastical organization. These unquestionably have their place. But they do not constitute the gospel; nor should they occupy the primary place in Christian instruction. Nor are these paragraphs to be taken as impugning missionaries. They are a noble band—the salt of the earth. They are, nevertheless, the product of their denominations. In their formal Christian teaching, doctrine and polity are given a leading place. As a rule, however, they live the gospel better than they teach it. And living is the most effective method of teaching.

12. The time for the rise of a wholly native church depends on a number of circumstances, among which are: (a) The existence of many local congregations whose membership is large enough to insure a steady, well-educated, representative constituency. (b) Their complete self-support and self-government, coupled with zeal

and ability for self-propagation. Experience in local self-government is an essential requisite to a more comprehensive organization. Financial self-support is a sure sign that belief has taken firm hold; that Christianity has become well rooted and can continue regardless of foreign favors and financial backing; that it is no longer an exotic, but has become indigenous. (c) A feeling on the part of native leaders of restiveness under foreign control, and a desire for perfect freedom in thought and organization, in order to secure a native church wholly free from imposed occidentalisms, and from the charge of being a "foreign" religion.

13. The danger of perpetuating unnecessary and even disadvantageous denominational differences in non-Christian lands arises more from missionaries, boards, and supporting constituencies in Christian lands than from native Christians. To these latter the differences between Protestant denominations are insignificant—many of them even meaningless. It is far easier for Japanese than for American Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and Congregationalists to unite. This they should be allowed to do when the above-named conditions have been fulfilled. The Christian duty, therefore, of those in home lands who pray for the unity of the church of Christ is to stand aside and allow the native churches that have grown up under their care to unite in such wise as the Holy Spirit may lead them. American and English Christians should not oppose union movements of native Christians.

14. But what, it will be asked, should be the relation of missionaries and mission boards to such native churches? They should, of course, work together in harmonious co-operation and mutual consultation. But for how long? Until the native church is able effectively to carry on its home missionary work alone. In case the native church departs so widely from the gospel, as understood by any denomination, as to cause its serious perversion, that denomination is free, of course, to establish its own independent work. By so doing it appeals to the practical test of competition—to the struggle for existence and survival of the fit. For this is the method ordained of God whereby he reveals his approval of truth and his condemnation of error.

15. There would seem to be no good reason why all Presbyterian

boards working in any land should not unite their efforts to the up-building of one native Presbyterian church, as in Japan and India, nor why all Methodist work should not unite in one native Methodist church. Such union movements may well be inaugurated and even carried through by missionaries. Further union movements, however, should generally wait on the demands of native leaders and be carried out by them. They should be left to choose and to harmonize, so far as they can, the various elements of the various denominations. Their tentative programmes they must experiment with and test. By a gradual process of adopting, adapting, or dropping, a form of church organization and of statement of Christian belief may finally be attained, fitted to the peculiar needs of their own land.

16. And yet, although I approve unreservedly and heartily of union efforts, I am not sanguine that the ideal of a single national church wholly free from schism will be attained, or, if once attained, long maintained. Should the native church adopt any form of organization or creed in which authority and conformity play a part, schism will surely arise sooner or later. The numerous sects of Buddhism and Shintoism argue ill for the long survival in Japan of an undivided Christian church. Only on condition that the native organization allow utmost freedom in belief, ritual, and practice could such a church arise. Yet, to theological conservatives and to advocates of a "strong" church government, such freedom would be unacceptable.

17. In closing this paper, I would emphasize the following practical points: (a) Missions and boards should make every effort to cooperate in their institutional work—schools, publications, hospitals and dispensaries, and even in their theological seminaries, seeking the highest efficiency of the whole rather than denominational advantage. They will thus manifest their real unity, which is deeper and stronger than their differences. (b) Missionaries should take pains to make known to their own Christians their high regard for other denominations.

By carrying out these two general policies the evils of denominationalism will be largely avoided, and native Christians will be prepared for their own union movement in God's own time.

SIDNEY L. GULICK

The above question scarcely admits of an unqualified answer. It seems clear that, until our fellow-Christians in China have sufficient experience and knowledge to frame a church system, or systems, of their own, the missionaries of necessity will have to instruct them in these matters, and to a large extent to take the initiative in introducing some kind of church order. In doing this they will, of course, be guided mainly by their own convictions on the subject, as formed in the home lands; that is to say, the tendency will be to reproduce the church government of their own denomination. At the same time, it may be affirmed, without reservation, that the introduction by a missionary of his own church order, in a mere "rule-of-thumb" manner, would argue serious unfitness for his calling. A slight knowledge of church history and a common-sense observation of things as they are in the ecclesiastical world are enough to convince anyone that each and all of the various systems prevailing in modern Christendom have largely been shaped and colored by influences connected with the political and social life of the countries in which they have grown up. It may, indeed, be stated without exaggeration that nearly all of these systems give expression either to compromises between conflicting views, or to the triumph, and therefore undue predominance, of one set of ideas over an opposing school of thought. Men being what they are, it is inevitable that, in the heat of conflict and controversy, the judicial temper should often be impaired. In a revolt from the exaggerations and abuses of one type of church order, the pendulum has swung to the other extreme, and a new system has resulted with its own inherent limitations and mistakes. And these, as time goes on, have given rise, in their turn, to a new campaign of protest and secession.

Hence, while it would be a serious confession of weakness, and even a culpable drawing-back from duty, for a missionary to decline to introduce some ecclesiastical order in the churches under his care, he should remember that what may, on the whole, be the most suitable for us, with centuries of church life behind us, will be cumbersome and positively hurtful, if introduced as a finished product from Christian lands. He will, if wise, therefore endeavor, as far as possible, to cultivate detachment of mind in respect to his own and other denominational forms familiar to him in his own country.

He must discriminate between what is cardinal and fundamental in them, and those features which are the result of local influence. He will bear in mind that the New Testament is not explicit on this subject. It contains no crystallized, formulated statement. It gives us an outline of the growth and development of the Christian church during one generation, leaving us to infer from the account certain general principles, and to trace their practical application to actual circumstances and requirements as they arose. Doctrinaire discussions as to the relative rights and responsibilities of church officers and the rest of the congregation are conspicuous by their absence; nor is it difficult for a dispassionate reader to perceive that, in the actual arrangements of that era, there are adumbrations of the various principal ecclesiastical ideas, which since then have found expression in more or less rival or antagonistic systems. However much we may deplore the resultant situation, as we have it in our own lands, and may seek to mitigate it by plans of federation, it is obviously impossible to revert to New Testament conditions in the case of our home churches. In that of the young Christian communities in the mission field it is far otherwise. It may, indeed, be safely said that the true and permanent solution of the ecclesiastical problem there will be found only in this way. While in practice each missionary will naturally give prominence to that particular aspect of church government to which, by previous training, he is personally attached, he will, if guided by the foregoing line of thought, do so only to a very modified extent; and will be careful to make his arrangements sufficiently elastic to admit of their healthy growth and modification in harmony with the particular characteristics of the race among whom he is privileged to labor. He will seek to avoid the mistake aptly described by the French as "governing too much," but will rather remember that, if the young church is a living and healthy organism, it will grow after its own order, and will be free from that ecclesiastical self-consciousness that finds its expression in elaborate and redundant paper constitutions. His part is to introduce certain simple germ principles, which, as they grow, will largely receive their external form and color from their environment. When the process, for instance, by which the present conventional place of worship was evolved from the assembly-hall commonly used in

cities during primitive times is considered, the introduction by missionaries of that particular type of building, among peoples whose architecture is of a totally different character, seems, to say the least, superfluous and uncalled for. In some countries the effect of such a practice is apt to be positively detrimental to the cause of Christianity, as it tends to excite the dislike and mistrust of foreign religions which are felt in varying degrees by most races. The same, of course, applies to the fittings, vestments, and other accessories of public worship. The principles contained in the old refrain, "Be it ever so humble, there is no place like home," can with advantage be applied to this part of our subject. If it is becoming more and more widely recognized that certain large sections of our modern city populations do not like to enter the ordinary place of worship, and that, if they are to be reached, halls more resembling their usual haunts have to be secured, how much more should the same principle be followed among the peoples of other climes and continents! The missionary, therefore, needs above all things to be delivered from that stupid parochialism, which tends to obliterate the individuality and initiative of his converts, by the introduction of practices and arrangements merely because they are what, through training and habit, suit his ideas and habits best.

The writer having for over twenty years been a missionary in China, it may not be out of place to add a few remarks referring more particularly to that country.

It may be taken as certain that before long the churches in countries such as Japan and China will insist upon making their own arrangements, and correspondingly resent any attempt on the part of missionaries to curtail their liberty in this respect. From this point of view the wisdom of our not now drawing the bow too tight is obvious. The time is rapidly approaching when the provincialism that imagines that we ourselves have all the knowledge and wisdom, and ignores the fact that other races have powers and qualities from which we can obtain profit and instruction, will meet with its well-merited rebuke and discomfiture. The history of China, for instance, furnishes a record of achievements in the domain of government probably unsurpassed in the history of mankind. China has produced a literature and worked out a social and political system which, whatever its

defects and errors, has, through the shocks and vicissitudes of many centuries, held together a civilized society numbering hundreds of millions and covering a vast and diversified area of country. It is much to be desired that the past political and social history of China should be more widely and intelligently studied in western lands than has hitherto been the case. Until this is done, reproaches of the Chinese on the score of their ignorance and self-conceit seem out of place. We cannot afford to despise a race which, without the facilities of modern means of communication and mechanical skill, has during so long a period of time developed and maintained a political, commercial, and social system of vast magnitude and importance. It may be taken as certain that, as time goes on, China will give to the Christian church men fitted for leadership and endowed with organizing power on a large scale. Nor can the fact be ignored by anyone attempting to forecast the future ecclesiastical development of Christianity in that country, that from time immemorial the governmental ideal, set forth by her literature and cherished by her scholars, is that of a benevolent despotism, combined with a real and healthy influence of popular opinion. In dealing with a people of so strong and independent a spirit as the Chinese, it can at all events be predicted with confidence that any attempt to force upon them the diversified denominationalism of our home lands will end in disaster. Here, if nowhere else, the missionary needs to exercise the utmost self-restraint and discrimination between essentials and incidentals in the forms existing in his own land, and to bear in mind the words of his Divine Master: "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break and the wine runneth out . . . ; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."

D. E. HOSTE

There could not be a better field than China for observations on such an important question as the one before us: "Should denominational distinctions be perpetuated in mission work?" A hundred years have rolled away since Morrison endured the vituperation of foes and the misunderstanding of friends in his attempt to introduce the Christian religion into China. In this period, and in *all* this period, missions of every persuasion have faced a common enemy, a common

"hatred of the foreigner," and now join in celebrating a common victory already within sight. This state of things has conduced to a drawing together of the forces of Christianity at work in China. It was said to the writer by a veteran missionary: "The different missions at work out here are like the various companies in one regiment of soldiers." It is also the psychological moment for consideration of the question. A movement, emanating from northern China, is on foot for the federation of *all missions at work in China* and for the unification of the Christian Chinese church. This is referred to by the various contributors to this article. Suffice it to say that opinion is against a mere mechanical union brought about by a majority vote, while the trend of thought is strongly in favor of doing away with the causes of friction that mar the ethical unity of the church of Christ; and the probability is that any action taken at the great conference to be held in Shanghai in the spring of 1907 will be along this line.

Invitations to contribute to this symposium were sent out to leaders of missions in central China whose experience in the field demands that their opinions receive consideration. Through pressure of work, or other reasons, some have felt unable to send replies; others again have given verbal answers. The various contributions in this article should therefore be regarded as representative rather than as exhaustive: an indication of the attitude of missionaries as a whole to this great problem that in the near future is to confront the church in China, and not as a final pronouncement on the matter on the part of any individual missionary or mission.

Rev. T. E. North, district chairman, Wesleyan missionary, with a quarter of a century of experience in China mission work, writes:

It is somewhat startling to have to reply to the question: "Should denominational distinctions be perpetuated in mission work?" by what practically amounts to "Yes;" but though one shrinks from the bald monosyllabic reply, I suspect that the trend of a more detailed reply from myself could be only that. In the first place, then, I do not think that these denominational distinctions in themselves are a serious matter, except possibly in one or two extreme cases, and that whether as regards matters of church administration or of doctrine. To endeavor to efface these distinctions is, in my opinion, simply to emphasize and magnify them in the eyes of our native converts. As regards plant, church discipline, responsibility for members and their conduct, relationship to Chinese authorities, both the claims of our home churches and the moral claim of the

Chinese government, as well as the comfort and convenience of the various missions, demand the continued recognition of the various societies. In case of a breach of Chinese law on the part of a mission preacher or schoolmaster, for instance, to whom would the Chinese official turn if all distinctions were obliterated? Fortunately there is no great difference in the moral standards which we seek to establish among even our ordinary church members, but one would hardly like to become responsible in the eyes of the Chinese for the conduct of men over whom one has no jurisdiction or control whatever; and it would not be difficult to imagine such a position under the circumstances supposed. There is too much talk these days about a *union* which practically means *uniformity*, and that alike of creed and terminology and worship. To my mind this not merely belies the name "nonconformists," of which many of us are so justly proud, but strikes a serious blow at the principles of Protestantism itself. I would almost as soon hand over our converts to the thralldom of Rome and the rule of the Pope as enslave them to any system of theology or church practice, however excellent, if regarded as absolutely binding on their conscience. True union is to be cultivated and sought after by every means in our power, but I regard true union as a union, not of sameness, but of diversities; and the more diverse and numerous our unimportant differences, the grander and deeper the unity which in Christ Jesus binds us together in the bonds of brotherly affection and united purpose and aim. Fortunately such strivings after *uniformity* must defeat their own aim, but it is lamentable to think of the energies and time frittered away in quest of this wrong ideal. A frank recognition of differences of conviction and creed, and, at the same time, a sense of the true deeper union which exists already, would, I feel sure, pave the way for a federation of our mission churches—a federation which will enable us in a temperate way to face the questions affecting mission comity as they arise—e. g., division of territory for mission operations, withdrawal from or exchange of stations in some cases, owing to geographical considerations—and lead us from time to time to unite in special social, literary, or educational work. Is not a craving for uniformity too often the result of narrowness of view, and lack of consideration for the convictions of others? Is it not devoid of the very elements of true union? Does it give much hope for securing wisely directed federation?

Rev. A. S. Adams, the veteran superintendent of the work of the American Baptist Missionary Union in Hanyang, writes:

Denominationalism has its roots in the churches at home, and these churches would soon use the ax if the branches in the mission field did not bear fruit according to the root. The whole question seems to me to imply that these distinctions are not worth the reproduction; but surely what has so aided in the purity and growth of the church at home (by the natural process of argument and conviction among men in earnest about the truth) cannot but be of equal service on the mission field. Yet, for the sake of the churches we represent, the converts

whom we shepherd, and the truth committed to us, we should endeavor to reproduce the best in these distinctions, without the strife and bitterness which was but the working yeast and scum of the vintage, and not the pure wine of truth. Moreover, the practical work of a mission in China is involved, and I should deprecate any outside attempt to prevent the natural growth of the vine of truth on these various denominational fences. These subdivisions certainly have the merit for greater efficiency, if only for the reason that I pay more attention to *my* garden than to the cultivation of *ours*. They act, too, on the native church as to the watchcare of the flock. One of the strongest arguments against the federation scheme, in my opinion, is that all are reduced to the same dull level; and when our converts go astray, as alas they will, if we are all known by the same name it will be difficult to detect and discipline a defaulter. The natural laws of selection and survival of the fittest must be allowed to act in the denominational as in other realms. It would be impossible for an equal distribution of the world's wealth to remain an equality of possession for twenty-four hours. Men's capacities and inclinations differ. So with truth: an equality of power to receive and appreciate truth is almost inconceivable. Men's minds naturally appreciate different shades of thought. I am a *Baptist by conviction*; my brother is a *Churchman by conviction*. His spiritual food comes in one way and mine in another, but we are both children of God by *conversion*. We must ever remember that there is cohesion—the cohesion of love—among us in spite of our so-called “distinctions.” In the strength of this cohesion the army of the Lord in China will be led on to victory.

Rev. Arnold Foster, B. A. (Cambridge), the chairman of the Central China District Committee of the London Missionary Society, with an experience that takes in nearly four decades of mission work in China, gives a valued contribution. It is a matter of profound regret that it is necessary considerably to curtail it. He says:

I have been asked to reply to the question: “Should denominational distinctions be perpetuated in mission work?” The question assumes, not unreasonably, that “denominational distinctions,” as such, have no permanent place in Christ's ideal for his church, but are rather an imperfection which clings to Christianity as it has been handed down to us, and as it exists today in the lands from which missionaries go forth. Looked at in this light, one can have no hesitation in saying of *this* weakness: it should certainly *not* be perpetuated either in mission work or among ourselves. But when we come to consider practically *how* this imperfection is to be got rid of, and *when*, and *by whom*, we find ourselves dealing with a highly complex problem, and one that cannot be disposed of by a mere act of will, or by ignoring all the most important elements in the complication, and all the wonderful train of causes that led up to it. Although we admit that “denominational distinctions are not ideal,” it does not follow that they are at all times and under all circumstances inherently injurious. Nor

does it follow that a Christianity from which all such distinctions had been eliminated would necessarily be any nearer Christ's ideal for his church than is the divided Christianity which exists amongst us today.

The expression "denominational distinctions" is capable of two interpretations, both of which should be clearly before our minds. The expression may stand (a) for different parties or camps in the church into which Christians arrange themselves according to their views of particular theological questions, ecclesiastical practices, and other matters. Or it may stand (b) for differences of view or practice among Christians, who do not therefore separate themselves into different bodies. In the New Testament we have illustrations of both these kinds of denominational distinctions. (a) At a very early stage in the history of the church we find at Corinth separate camps in the Christian community of that city, calling themselves respectively after the names of Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, somewhat as Christians of later date have come, though perhaps less culpably, to call themselves after the name of "Luther," "Calvin," or "Wesley." (b) The Acts, the Epistle to the Ephesians, and the Epistle of James, not now to speak of other books of the New Testament, reveal differences of teaching and of practice among the apostles themselves, which even *they* found it not altogether easy to harmonize. In the hands of less spiritually minded teachers such differences tend to crystallize into contending systems. These and other distinctions in the days of the apostles represented intensely living and real differences then existing, which, if they had become actively antagonistic, might easily have developed denominations in the church. I cannot doubt that a common devotion to Christ among the leaders in the Christian community, and an intense and constantly deepening realization of the greatness of the kingdom of God and of the vastness of the divine counsels, alone saved the situation. The ability of believers in the first days to preserve an outwardly united church life before the world was not due either to the fact that the majority could rule the minority, or to the fact that the minority was convinced by the reasonings of the majority; nor was it due to a growing indifference on both sides to the great importance of varying aspects of the truth. There were dissentients no doubt, but they, in place of separating from their brethren because of the differences between them, seem to have accepted what we should call a "policy of comprehension." The whole history of that time deserves close study and will repay it.¹ The Bible supplies us with principles that suggest the solution of all our difficulties. It would seem that denominational distinctions found a twofold expression in the first days. The one was due to the essential weakness of human nature only imperfectly influenced by the spirit of the Christian revelation, the other to the essential greatness and manifoldness of the gospel. *Life* involves variety and involves change. It involves also a certain conflict and competition between dissimilar ideals. The inherent superiority of one ideal over the other will be manifest only when both have been fully tested. To bring the two prematurely into "unity" by

¹ For such study two books by Dr. Hort are of the greatest value, *The Christian Ecclesia* and *Judaistic Christianity*.

stopping the development of both can lead to no unity worth having, and is a course subversive of the real interests of the truth. Rather we should look forward to a time when what *we* regard as conflicting theories, or as competing ideals, shall be recognized by men of larger vision than we as really complementary truths, both deserving of sympathetic treatment, even though we, in our ignorance, see not how to harmonize them.

I come now to speak particularly of the question of "denominational distinctions" as, during a long life in China, I have observed them and their working in mission churches. At the outset I must avow my belief that, whatever may be the disadvantages connected with denominational distinctions, the outcry against denominationalism tends greatly to divert attention from the *real* cause of lack of unity among Christians, whether at home or abroad, which is nothing else than a want of love and of the mind that was in Christ, and to fix our thoughts and hopes instead on improved plans for bringing about, through formal federation, united organizations, and schemes for mutual compromise on points of doctrine or of ecclesiastical order, a state of general uniformity in mission churches. Such devices and expedients move on an altogether lower plane of Christian conception and thinking than that which the New Testament emphasizes. "By this," says Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another." It is, I imagine, within the experience of most missionaries of long standing that some of the closest and most intimate friendships existing in the mission field are between persons belonging to different missions. The keen eyes of the Chinese do not fail to observe where the missionary finds his affinities; and where the Chinaman, Christian or non-Christian, sees all the indications of brotherly love and sympathy between one man and another, he pays but little heed to those denominational distinctions which are supposed to mar the unity of the church.

The truth is that the real danger of discrediting the unity of the church may quite as easily arise within the limits of the same society and in the midst of the same forms of worship, as amid separate societies and in connection with varying church customs. What matters it that two missionaries are united in the same outward system, if the Chinese around them know that they bear no love one to the other? What profit is to be expected from federation of churches and societies, unless the people whose work is involved have learned by spiritual discipline to bear and forbear with new fellow-workers, trained in different surroundings, and possessed by utterly different views on questions of the greatest importance? Let no one hastily assume that *of course* Christian workers on the mission field can always easily work with anybody possessed of the ambition to bring to the heathen the knowledge of Christ. Not only is it not the case in fact; it requires but very little knowledge of human nature to enable one to realize that to live peaceably with all men, even with all Christian workers, requires much patience, forbearance, lowliness of mind; and that such blessed fruits of a high Christian character will not always follow upon votes of majorities on mission boards deciding to abolish denominational distinctions.

For myself, I must say that it is through the exercise of *right feeling* and *thoughtful love*, treating generously and frankly each difficulty caused by denominational distinctions *as it arises*, that my chief hope for a universally prevailing visible unity among Christians lies. Spiritual forces, it is true, move much more slowly than improvised human plans of "moral compulsion."

But it is also true that the "kingdom of God cometh not by observation": not while men are elaborating schemes for differentiating between necessary and unnecessary articles of belief, that will include all the Christians whom the framers of these schemes think ought to be included, and shut out only those whom these same persons think are too "broad" or too "narrow" to be comprehended in their plan; not thus cometh the kingdom, but, like the King himself, it "cometh" in an hour and in ways that are least expected, for in truth both the kingdom and the King are *ever present* in the conscious experience of those who love one another, and who, without regard to name or party, are ever trying to be helpful to all who in any way are seeking only the glory of the Lord and the welfare of men.

Alike to the masterful mind and to the mind that is unable to see the importance of any theological or ecclesiastical distinctions, it is easy to evolve a system for harmonizing denominational differences in the line of formal compromises of opinion and practice, while overlooking the *sine qua non* of love. The former will treat as essential points on which he himself holds a strong and definite opinion; on all other points, about which he is indifferent, he will allow every variation of doctrine and practice that anybody desires. The latter, while feeling very strongly the importance of his own theological beliefs, does not see exactly how at any point these beliefs are inconsistent with, or exclude, their opposites. It is needless to say that, while the breaking-down of denominational barriers on either of these grounds may be possible for many, it is absolutely impossible for others. The very attempt to obliterate what theologians know to be important practical distinctions is only likely to sow seeds of active dissension, even in the same mission, between those who on the one side have had no theological training and hold lightly by all theological distinctions, and those on the other side who have carefully studied theology. These know that some of the differences that have kept Christians apart in their church organizations in bygone days are as real as the differences that in the world of medicine make it necessary for the homeopathist and the allopathist to work in different hospitals. Such distinctions cannot be lightly ignored.

One other point should be always borne in mind, viz., that even though such names as "Lutheran," "Calvinistic," and "Wesleyan," which have meant much to the church in the West, should die a natural death in China, it cannot but be that, as the church takes root in China, and as great teachers, thinkers, orators, or organizers from among the Chinese spring up and influence deeply the conscience and religious thought of the nation, China will have its own problems of denominational distinctions to face. It is my deep conviction that the welfare of the church in China demands that we who know something of the

slow growth of the Christian ideal and of the full apprehension of the truth, as it is in Jesus, in western lands, should refrain altogether from seeking to suppress differences among Christians that plainly are not due to the perversity or self-assertion of human nature, but rather correspond with various aspects of the truth in all its manifoldness.

The Church of Rome sought in the past for a unity essentially unspiritual. No better symbol of that unity can be suggested than that which is afforded today by the worship of God in all lands carried on by the Romish church in a dead language! Well said the reformers of the English church in one of their Thirty-nine Articles: "It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God and the custom of the primitive church to have publick prayer in the church or to minister the sacraments in a tongue not understood by the people." But as Rome could recognize only one language in which public prayer could be offered to God, so it could tolerate only one statement of truth, one theory of the ministry, and one view of many other things. It had come first to frown on, and then to persecute, all others. There was no room in the Romish system for spiritual liberty, elasticity of church organization, or recognition of the rights of the individual conscience, and of the claims of reason, or for different interpretations of Scripture. This unspiritual unity had to be shattered in pieces. "Above all the ideal of an infallible church holding plenary powers from an absent King had to be rooted out before men could begin to see the *gradual development* which is God's word to successive generations. . . . The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the afterswell of the storm; and only the nineteenth was free to take up the work which the Reformation made possible even in countries where it was rejected. That work is hardly more than begun, but we can already see its character. Our losses are no doubt immense. The old social order is gone, the old conception of miracle and inspiration is overthrown, and a growing tangle of practical questions represents the growing complexity of life and thought. But is there no gain in our wider knowledge of truth? In a more strenuous and earnest life? In a quickened hatred of social wrong? In a higher tone of that national conscience which under any form of government speaks the final word? Is it nothing to know Christ as He was never known before? To see the realms of grace and nature joined in their incarnate Lord"?²

It is for missionaries to understand that it has *not* been given us more than to a previous age to settle what extent of divergency is allowable in the church of God—in regard either to orders of church government, to the interpretation of Scripture, or to the method of administering baptism. The church has not yet attained to a full-orbed view of the exceeding breadth of the law of God, of the law of truth, and of the law of the church's development. Let us not think by feeble compromises to hand on to the church in China a doctrine of the Christian ministry patched up to suit all comers, or a teaching that all Christians

² Professor Gwatkin, *The Eye for Spiritual Truth*, pp. 54, 55.

must be content with for the sake of unity. We sometimes hear it said: "It is impossible that all Christian sects can be right." It would be more to the point to say: "It is highly improbable that *any one of them* has the whole range of truth in sight, or that any one of them has nothing that is not better represented elsewhere." Let us not believe that it is the duty of the missionary to settle in consultation with his fellows what residuum of truth we shall extract from the beliefs and practices that are today common to all the reformed churches of the West, and decide that on that basis a native church in China must spring up, to develop itself subsequently on its own lines. Let us rather remember that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ"—Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended. It is ours to hand on a gospel of *life*, and we shall do so most satisfactorily if we simply move each one on those lines of "life" which we have proved for ourselves, and which are natural to us—at the same time showing all love to those in whom the one life manifests itself through somewhat different symbols and different forms of teaching.

From the foregoing contributions it will be seen that the trend of opinion amongst missionaries in central China on the question of the perpetuation of denominational distinctions in this field is this: As signs of weakness and of non-attainment of the Christian ideal they are to be deplored; as productions—secondary productions—of the great crises in the evolution of the Christian ideal in western lands it is probable that, being exotics in an uncongenial climate, they will not flourish; and it is to be hoped that following on their natural decadence in China other denominational distinctions of purely Chinese origin and conception will not spring up. The apprehension of truth seems to move in cycles more or less well defined; at present in this mission field the Christian church appears to have reached the first stage only—in the reception of a new idea, in the dawn of Christian truth on the human consciousness. The second stage, that of scrutiny and selection, seems barely to have been entered on. It is in the next generation that one must expect to find the Chinese church concerned about the question before us. It is instructive to note that missionaries in general, true to their ideals of mission work, are more careful to set forth the ethical than the denominational side of Christianity. The new arrival may come out imbued with the idea of founding Episcopalian, or Baptist, or Methodist, or Congregational, or Presbyterian churches; but the very immensity of the field in which he labors, the noble example of Christian comradeship set by his seniors of divers missions, the community of interests, the common

enemy, all combine to change the bent of his inclinations, and he begins to work for the *whole* rather than for the *part*, for the coming of the King into his kingdom rather than for the prosperity of his own mission.

In conclusion, let me state that the conception of a church in sections, as represented by various denominations, is not a novel one to the Chinese mind. Strangely coupled with intolerance of the foreigner is toleration of his religious systems. The *san kiao* (three religions), Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, not only exist side by side, but intermingle on every hand. In fact, a religious Chinaman belongs to all three religions at one and the same time and does not find them incongruous. One often hears *san kiao* placed side by side, for comparison, with the *liang kiao* (two religions) of the West, viz., the Church of Rome and the Reformed church. And it is in this direction that the Chinese sees "distinctions"—distinctions both appealing to his eye and to his mind—rather than in the various companies into which the regiment of the soldiers of Christ have for divers reasons separated themselves. I am inclined to think that the intelligent Chinese, be he Christian or non-Christian, will see the "propriety"—to use his favorite word—of maintaining in things essential, unity, in things doubtful, liberty, in all things, charity.

BERNARD UPWARD

Inasmuch as so many of the mission fields are located in the Orient, and the writer's experience has been limited to one of the oriental fields, he begs leave to amend slightly the topic, so that it will read: "Should the denominational distinctions of Christian lands be perpetuated on oriental mission fields?" The answer to this question is a most emphatic "No;" and this answer is based upon five reasons: Because such distinctions are (1) occidental, (2) accidental, (3) disproportionate, (4) unnecessary, (5) un-Christian.

1. The *occidental* denominational distinctions of Christian lands should not be perpetuated on oriental mission fields. Those distinctions grew up out of the peculiar political, social, intellectual, moral, and religious conditions of occidental nations. They are natural outgrowths of occidental civilization, and may have been even neces-

sary phases of the religious life of the Occident. But this fact does not prove that they are necessary in the religious life of the Orient; and it is evident that they are not natural growths but excrescences in oriental civilization. As Hall says,³ they "commemorate only the local history of the West;" "many of them sprang from episodes in European history involving no necessary world-relation;" and their theology "may be meaningless for eastern minds." And they hinder, by extra-territoriality in religion, the development of Christian self-consciousness and self-expression in the East.

2. The *accidental* denominational distinctions of Christian lands should not be perpetuated in oriental mission fields. Those distinctions may be called "accidental" in two senses of that word: some of them came about somewhat by chance; others emphasize, not the essential, but the accidental, or incidental, phases of Christianity. "It is curiously interesting to note upon what small, incidental action of individuals may depend the form of a dogma; upon the presence or absence of some person; upon the numerical chances of a vote; upon the current phraseology of the day" (Hall). It is not much less than disgraceful that the lasciviousness of Henry VIII should have affected the relations between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for Christians, especially for those in oriental lands, "to discriminate between the differentia of the Christian sects and the common essence of the Christian religion."

3. The *disproportionate* denominational distinctions of Christian lands should not be perpetuated in oriental mission fields. Some of the denominational distinctions tend to distribute the emphasis unfairly between the major and the minor, the important and the insignificant, the essential and the incidental, elements of Christianity. The main purpose of a separate denomination is often to put the emphasis upon some point which is thought to be neglected by the other denominations. "Every religion and every denomination in the Christian religion has its weakness in overemphasizing some phase of truth and underemphasizing others."⁴ Therefore there is a constant tendency to divide and split up on comparatively unimportant differences of opinion. And such disproportion looms larger

³ *Universal Elements of the Christian Religion.*

in the East than in the West, is more dangerous, and should therefore be avoided. The common essence of Christianity is a good platform for oriental believers.

4. The *unnecessary* denominational distinctions of Christian lands should not be perpetuated on oriental mission fields. It may be that those distinctions were once necessary; but it seems quite evident that they are no longer all necessary, even in occidental lands, where they are gradually breaking down under the growing demand for comity, unity, and union. And still greater reason is there why distinctions which are no longer necessary should not divide the Christian forces in oriental mission fields, and should not hamper and hinder the work of evangelization, where, indeed, "union is strength," nay, is absolutely necessary. More than "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," is unnecessary in the Orient.

5. The *un-Christian* denominational distinctions of Christian lands should not be perpetuated on oriental mission fields. This term "un-Christian" is not employed with the idea of casting slurs on conscientious Christians. It is used merely in the sense that such distinctions were not recognized by Christ himself and are contrary to his spirit. They had no place in the time or the thought of Christ. And even if it is urged that Christ showed by his prayer for unity that he feared dissension, it still remains true that he desired and prayed for unity. Paul, too, the "wise master-builder," realized that "sectarian movements were incompatible with the ideal of a church as he conceived it" (Hall).⁵ And if oriental Christians are able, as they seem likely to be, to sink differences and distinctions imposed upon them from the outside, they should certainly not be hindered from accomplishing a unity in harmony with the spirit of our Lord.

The writer now begs leave to make another slight amendment in the topic under consideration, and to propose the question: "Will the denominational distinctions of Christian lands be perpetuated in oriental mission fields?" And realizing the difficulties and dangers of posing as a prophet, he is willing, nevertheless, as far as he can read the signs of the times in Japan, to reply again

⁴ Hume, *Missions from the Modern View*.

⁵ I Cor. 1:10-13.

with a most emphatic "No." It is natural, reasonable, inevitable, that the Orient, under the leadership of Japan, should develop its own type, or types, of Christianity. Japanese Christians realize this very profoundly. At the meeting of the Japan Evangelical Alliance in May, 1906, plans were adopted, not only for reforming that loose organization into a more definite church federation, but also for the union of as many churches as possible into a Japanese church of Christ. The Japanese naturally lack the intense spirit of love and loyalty for a particular denomination. They are inclined to minimize their differences and magnify their correspondences in such a way as to organize a national church. The trend in Japan is to nationalize institutions, from railroads up to religions. While the Anglo-Saxons want to fight for a principle and will often die before they will yield one iota of individual liberty, the Japanese will sacrifice personal opinions and convenience on the altar of public welfare, and will yield a little to each other in order to effect a compromise on some common basis. Just as they have evolved a form of constitutional government which theoretically recognizes the "divine right" of the emperor to be absolute in his realm, but in practice gives the people a large measure of administration with such representative institutions as an imperial diet and local self-government; so they seem likely to develop a form of Christianity such as Hume calls "Episcopresbyterian." The Japanese are syncretic, synthetic, in politics, education, and religion. Just as they nationalized Buddhism and Confucianism, and brought them into more or less harmony with Shinto, so they will nationalize Christianity and harmonize it with a modernized *Yamato-damashii*. The resultant religion, which will inspire New Japan in her leadership of the Far East, may be a kind of christianized Bushido.

Such a form of Christianity would disarm prejudice and hostility. There is opposition, whether right or wrong, to the gospel, or at least prejudice against it, because it is an imported article. A naturalized and unified form of Christianity would therefore win adherents, and extend the bounds of the influence of the gospel. Dr. De Forest well expressed it before the Evangelical Alliance in Tokyo when he said: "You have the right and privilege and duty of evolving, under the leading and inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, your own Chris-

tian church or churches, in such ways as shall best take hold of the social and national life of your beloved Japan."

In view, therefore, of the foregoing considerations, it is a natural conclusion that the occidental, accidental, disproportionate, unnecessary, and un-Christian denominational distinctions of Christian lands should not, and will not, be perpetuated in oriental mission fields. Christianity is, indeed, "a growing religion." "Cromwellian equipment and Cromwellian tactics were ample at Marston Moor, but would be [would have been] inadequate at Mukden." It seems much more natural and reasonable that, just as there were, or are, Jewish, Greek, Roman, German, French, Swiss, Scotch, Anglo-Saxon, and other occidental types of Christianity, there will also be Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and perhaps other oriental types of Christianity. Therein "the common essence shall localize itself in terms of thought and modes of practice adapted to the eastern conception of life." And, as Hall shows further, because "our Lord himself was an oriental," "nothing is more certain than that the common essence of Christianity lends itself to expression in the terms of the East." These new types of Christianity may possibly be less logical and sentimental, but they will likely be more simple and practical, than occidental Christianity. And it is not at all improbable that, as Bishop Gore suggests, oriental ways of thinking may influence, as they should, the ideas of occidental Christianity. Each needs the other to complete and unify Christianity.⁶ In that way only can Christians "measure up to the cosmopolitanism of Christ for whom there were no sects, no ecclesiastical polities, no dogmatic systems—only a world to be brought to him, and he, the Living Truth, to be brought to that world." This may be an ideal difficult of attainment, but it is Christ's ideal—"that they may all be one."

ERNEST W. CLEMENT

The only way to decide this question is by considering whether denominational distinctions should exist in Christian lands. Do the varieties of disposition and of culture justify the different views which men have of Christian truth? Does the present time call for

⁶ See *Missions from the Modern View*, pp. 208 f.

emphasis upon the truths which justified the rise of those bodies which are now carrying the gospel message abroad?

Missionary operations are merely the labors of the out-stretched arms of the religious organizations of Christian lands. Missionaries have their views and church relations. Interdenominational societies plan for denominational results and associate the workers so as to aggregate rather than counteract them. If denominations are inevitable in Christian lands, they are inevitable on mission fields.

Movements toward uniting the efforts of different sections of the same denominations have been set on foot, and in some cases at least have been successful, as for example that by the Presbyterians in Amoy.⁷

Baptists, including English, Canadian, and American, north and south, have counted themselves one in laying their plans for evangelization. Methodists and Wesleyans do the same, as also Congregationalists, American and British. But while even such unions have not been accomplished without effort, this is beside the point, for denominational distinctions are not eliminated by the formal alliances of sections of the same bodies.

An Englishman, long a judge in one of the provinces of British India, recently said: "The time will come when our work [that of the official and the missionary] will be overthrown. Orientalism will restore its supremacy." And, however confidently we assail his proposition, we must admit that in it is involved the crucial question: Will Christianity become indigenous in the Orient? The effect of denominations upon this is most interesting. Would the simple story of our Lord's life and teaching, free from the dogmas of modern or even of ancient times, be more apt to take root in this soil? It is worthy of remark that the nations in which it is now indigenous all received it when it was more or less systematized, and most of them did so after rival systems had been developed. Christianity is vital, and becomes indigenous in every soil. If it were a formal scholasticism, its habitat might be limited. Christianity presented as a life has already wrought itself deeply into the lives of many orientals, and is the motive force of many of the most active social organizations that they have.

Some hold that an outwardly divided Christianity is repugnant

⁷ *Ecumenical Miss. Con.*, Vol. I, p. 266.

to the unevangelized. Let it be noted that for the most part the unevangelized are not close observers. They mingle in their thought licentious traders and government officials with missionaries. The whites are called "Europeans" indiscriminately, and in many localities only the evangelized and educated discern the true distinctions.

Then disagreement in the views of those who are related in fraternal fellowship cannot be very offensive to the native mind. Buddhism has no coherent force. In thought there are great lines of cleavage. In practice it is even worse. It is difficult, if not impossible, to get enough Buddhists associated to carry on any respectable undertaking. Each devotee with property builds his little pagoda or kyoung, and others do not usually enter into the effort far enough even to repair an old structure, lest they fail to have the merit ascribed to them. Hindus associate in supporting priests and building temples, but are divided into two great sections denoted by the marks put on their foreheads. And these are greatly subdivided in thought. Even the solid front presented by Mohammedans is real only to the outsider. Within their own ranks they are Shiahs and Sumahs, who unite only to resist a common enemy. Denominations are quite in accord with the genius of the Orient and do not offend the native mind.

The furtherance of "comity in missions" is most commendable. Our leading evangelical missionary bodies teach a fairly complete and symmetrical gospel when left to themselves. Each should be permitted to carry on its work without the feeling that a rivalry is pressed upon it by the establishment of a new mission. The expression recently made in this connection, that the world is getting small, does not do credit to consecrated common-sense. There must be a limit to opening new fields, and it is better to develop old ones than to place several in the same neighborhood. There are sufficient destitute communities in fields which are now called "occupied" to arouse in the missionary the highest degree of enthusiasm. Let us hope that the missionary who exists merely for denominational extension shall not arise in our evangelical bodies. Interdenominational societies are as apt to err in this matter as any. Their championship of all makes them forgetful of the individual. Where a denomination is left alone in its ministry to a tribe

or people the evils of denominationalism are reduced to a minimum.

WALLACE ST. JOHN

I believe that the denominational distinctions of Christian lands should not be perpetuated on the mission fields, for the simple reason that they ought not to be perpetuated at home. I believe there is no adequate excuse for the continued existence of the scores of ecclesiastical bodies now existing in America. The Presbyterian and Reformed churches should be united in one body, all the churches of Congregational polity in another, the Methodist churches in another. Further than this, there is no sufficient reason for the separation of Presbyterian and Congregational churches, nor of Calvinistic and Arminian Christians, nor of Christians who baptize by one mode and Christians who baptize by another. There are, perhaps, certain general temperamental types now divided among the various churches, and it may be well, until we reach a riper stage of Christian character, to retain provision for the separation of the types; but such diversities will tend to disappear, and they furnish no adequate basis for a permanent division of Protestant Christendom. The doctrinal differences of truly evangelical Christians and their differences of polity, are not, to my mind, sufficient reason for an indefinite perpetuation of denominationalism. Not believing in it at home, except as a temporary necessity, I do not believe in its extension abroad.

There is less reason for our denominations abroad than here. Our denominational differences rest on historical grounds. This history has significance to us. It has none on the mission field. So far as our different churches spring from different historical incidents in our western life, they may justify themselves to us, but they cannot on these grounds justify themselves to the Chinese and Hindus. Our differences as to Christian doctrine, moreover, which seem to warrant our separation, are artificial in Asia. It is not necessary there to try to prevent men from being both Calvinists and Arminians at the same time, as most of them are, as a matter of fact, here at home now. Indeed, the Methodists have been working all these years with great success with a Calvinistic type of theology in China. One of them complained recently in a paper published by their press in Shanghai:

What distinctively Methodist literature does Methodism in China need at present? In answer I would say one thing needed is a work on systematic theology. So far as I know, there is no treatise from the Methodist standpoint. What we have is tinctured with a diluted Calvinism, not rank, to be sure, but still retaining a mild flavor of that dead system.

Many of us would think that theology that combined Calvinism and Arminianism was a very desirable theology, and that a native church could not be better supplied than with a theological teaching that recognized the truth in both of these systems. Some, however, are for separating the two and reproducing in Asia the theological differences of the West. In a later number of the little publication just referred to another missionary writes:

Many times have I been pained to hear our preachers present Calvinism to their congregations, and, what is worse, to know that the books taught in our theological seminaries are tinctured with that dead system. Let the Methodists of China look about and at once select a man filled with the spirit of God and Methodism, and set him aside for the work of preparing clean Methodist theological works.

It is to be hoped, however, that most missionaries will prefer the combination to the separation.

As to church government missionaries are great eclectics. The necessity of supervision makes consistent independency an impracticable polity, and hundreds of missionaries believe in the desirability of real episcopal oversight and suggestion who have no faith in any polity of episcopacy as an ecclesiastical theory. Large homogeneity of organization and method in the mission field indicates the superfluity of perpetuating there our denominational dissimilarities.

It is often urged in behalf of our divisions at home that they are mainly for administrative purposes, that organic church union would result in an unwieldy organization in which men would give less and work less than now. Whatever truth there may be in this contention as applied to home conditions, there is less as applied to conditions abroad. What is wanted there is the closest unity. The magnitude of the work to be done, the elementary needs of the people who are to be reached, the definiteness of the common missionary aim, the substantial agreement of all evangelical denominations in these fundamental convictions, the nature of our disagree-

ments which are so alien to the oriental mind—all invite us to unity in our foreign missionary enterprise.

The perpetuation of our denominational divisions is out of harmony with the central aim and purpose of a rational missionary policy. This aim is the establishment of strong national churches which shall be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing. Some missionary agencies, I know, do not proceed upon this view. They are endeavoring to establish this or that particular western denomination. Some are founding churches which even bear a western national name, and others relate the churches they are establishing and subordinate them to an American or European ecclesiastical court or authority. Such a policy is inconsistent with the missionary principles of Paul; it is debilitating to the native church; it will break down under the proper spirit of nationalism which education and contact with modern political ideas will inevitably produce.

Philosophical students of missions inevitably recognize this. "The aim of all missions in India," says Professor Christlieb, of Bonn, "should be to create an independent church in the future, neither Episcopalian, nor Presbyterian, nor Congregational, but the outcome of the national spirit. For, now that people are coming over to Christianity in masses, the question as to the formation of a Protestant National Indian Church must become ever more and more a burning one." "It behooved England," said Archbishop Benson, "to insist on the principle on which she lived—that in the whole united body of the Catholic church there must be national churches, and that each must hold the gospel with such forms as might interpret it in the best light to itself." Dr. Norman Macleod put the whole matter more vigorously still:

Is the grand army to remain broken up into separate divisions, each to recruit to its own standard, and to invite the Hindus to wear our respective uniforms, adopt our respective shibboleths, learn and repeat our respective war-cries, and even make caste marks of our wounds and scars, which to us are but the sad mementos of old battles? Or, to drop all metaphors, shall Christian converts in India be grouped and stereotyped into Episcopal churches, Presbyterian churches, Lutheran churches, Methodist churches, Baptist churches, or Independent churches, and adopt as their respective creeds the Confession of Faith, the Thirty-nine Articles, or some other formulas approved of by our forefathers, and the separating signs of some British or American sect? Whether

any church seriously entertains this design I know not, though I suspect it of some, and I feel assured that it will be realized in part as conversions increase by means of foreign missions, and be at last perpetuated, unless it is now carefully guarded against by every opportunity being watched and taken advantage of to propagate a different idea, and to rear up an independent and all-inclusive native Indian church. By such a church I mean one which shall be organized and governed by the natives themselves, as far as possible independently of us.

It is sometimes said that the native Christians in some foreign lands are stronger denominationalists than their missionary preceptors. There have been instances of this, but they have been exceptional. In many fields the great mass of native Christians do not know of these different denominations. They are Christians or believers in Jesus, and while they may know the difference between Protestants and Catholics, they are entirely capable of amalgamation in one common evangelical Christian church. Native Christian leaders are sometimes opposed to such a movement because they prefer to be supported by foreign funds, and they realize that these are more certain of continuance in subsidized denominational native churches. When all the native Christians unite, it means self-support and the wholesome exercise of control by the body of native lay Christians. Some native agents do not relish this, but the best men do. They have seen the right ideal, and they are working for it. Missionaries would help them. The best do. The bishop of Lucknow spoke plain words on this point at the Bengal Church Missionary Conference in 1882:

Yes, brethren, let us not deceive ourselves in this matter; the sin and shame of the disunion which exists among native Christians rest almost entirely with us European missionaries. It is *we* who are guilty; we conciliate our brethren, and have often carried ourselves stiffly and as though we had a monopoly of the grace of God; and the nonconformist missionaries have needlessly perpetuated their sectarianism and imposed it upon their converts in this heathen country where often the original cause of difference has no existence. God forgive us all, for we are verily guilty concerning our brethren. How should *they* know, how should *they* be able to stand out for union against those whom they regard as their spiritual fathers! No, it is *we* who are to blame, we with our pharisaism and our bigotry and our want of brotherly love. Let us not attempt to excuse or hide our fault, but, frankly acknowledging it to God and one another and our native brethren, try to make amends, and before it becomes quite too late, begin to strive sincerely and honestly to put away these unhappy divisions and build up the church of Christ in godly union and concord.

In this matter, however, missionaries only represent the churches which send them out. In some cases their home churches would not approve of their abandoning their denominational shibboleths. The home authorities have sometimes rebuked missionaries for being more Christian than denominational. But I believe that the great majority of the Christians at home do not give their money to extend and perpetuate a particular denomination, but to spread the simple knowledge of Christ; and those missionaries who constitute, I believe, the majority, who are tired of division, and who are pressing for unity on the foreign field, really represent the great majority of home Christians, and will have their support in abandoning western denominationalism in the interest of national church organizations.

Having said all this, however, I should like to add that there is a great deal of foolish talk on the subject of the extension of our denominations on the mission field. It is said that it confuses the native people, that it opens Christianity to reproach as compared with the non-Christian religions which are supposed to be free of denominationalism, and that missionaries spend their time trying to convert one another's converts or crowding in upon one another's fields. But the non-Christian religions are as full of sects and denominations and schools as Christianity is. The heathen people are not really perplexed at all by the competing arguments of warring denominations; and there are sensible and well-observed principles of missionary comity and co-operation, so commonly accepted that the cases of the rejection of these principles in the interest of denominational ambition and invasion are usually regarded as shameful by the common Christian sentiment at home and abroad. But the foolishness of some arguments against the perpetuation of our denominationalism must not invalidate the arguments grounded in facts and right reason.

Very possibly the national churches on the mission field will break up into denominations of their own. That will be their reproach, not ours; and such denominations, if they do come, will have their roots in reality, and not in the ecclesiastical history of alien races.

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